

Managing Erbitux & Vectibix Skin Side Effects

Some of the most common side effects among colorectal cancer patients who take Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor Inhibitors (EGFR-i) such as Erbitux (cetuximab) and Vectibix (panitumumab) are dry skin, acne, and rashes. Skin side effects are common and expected, and they can be managed. Symptoms can vary from mild to moderate. Taking an active role in managing the health of your skin before, during, and after treatment will help ease difficult side effects.

SKIN SIDE EFFECTS: TIPS & TRICKS

BEFORE TREATMENT

Prevention starts on Day 1

Many cancer teams now recommend starting skin prevention before treatment. This may include a daily moisturizer, sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher), and sometimes an oral antibiotic such as doxycycline to help reduce rash severity. Ask your care team what prevention plan is right for you.



When to get referred to a dermatologist

Skin toxicity symptoms may take between 1 and 4 weeks to develop after starting treatment. If issues with skin toxicity get worse, you can ask your care team to refer you to a dermatologist to discuss other options. Appropriate skin care can help you stay on your treatment plan longer and with less discomfort.

Learn the signs and symptoms

Skin rashes are common in cancer patients and can happen for a few different reasons. While not automatically a bad sign, many rashes are an expected side effect and may even indicate the treatment is working, especially with targeted therapies.

Most people treated with EGFR inhibitors develop some form of skin reaction, which usually appears on the face, scalp, neck, upper chest, and back. Hair and nails may also be affected.

Signs and symptoms of skin changes may include:

- Acne-like rash
- Dry skin that may feel rough, tight, or flaky, which may lead to cracking or peeling, especially on the hands and feet
- Mild to intense itching, possibly without a visible rash
- Redness/inflammation (common in areas exposed to the sun)
- Tender or sensitive skin (feels like burning, or sore to the touch)



What is Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor?

Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor (EGFR) is a protein found on many cells, including skin and cancer cells. It helps tell cells when to grow and divide, which can sometimes lead to cancer.

EGFR-inhibitor (EGFR-i) drugs block signals that tell cancer cells to grow. Cetuximab (Erbitux) and panitumumab (Vectibix) are examples. These treatments can help people with advanced (stage IV) colorectal cancer live longer.

Why do EGFR-i drugs affect the skin?

Skin cells have a lot of EGFR. When EGFR inhibitor drugs block cancer growth, they can also affect the skin, hair, and nails. This can cause a common side effect called a skin rash (sometimes called EGFR rash). Most people taking cetuximab or panitumumab will have some type of skin reaction.

DURING TREATMENT

Oral antibiotics - commonly used to prevent or treat rash, but do not necessarily indicate an infection.

Sun protection - any light exposure can worsen your rash, especially with EGFR inhibitors. Wear a hat and protective clothing outdoors, and apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) every day, even on cloudy days.

Keep skincare simple and gentle - use fragrance-free, hypoallergenic cleansers and moisturizers. Avoid scrubs, exfoliants, or acne products.

Stay ahead of dryness - moisturize right after bathing or showering, use caution with the temperature of the water, wear gloves to protect hands and nails, consider a humidifier if the air is dry, and stay well hydrated.

Reduce irritation - Choose soft, loose-fitting clothing, avoid harsh detergents and soaps, and gently pat skin when drying off, rather than rubbing.

Support itch and comfort - cool compresses can help soothe irritated areas. Keep nails short to reduce skin damage from scratching. Use caution when shaving. Razors can cause tiny cuts and raise the risk of infection. Use an electric razor or avoid shaving until the area improves.

Hair care - use a mild, fragrance-free shampoo and gently massage to clean the scalp. Condition regularly. Your hair may become finer, drier, or more brittle. Some people notice changes in texture, such as new curl or wave. Hair color can also change, though this varies from person to person.

Facial hair - eyelashes and eyebrows can thin out, or they may grow so long they bother your eyes. Trim them carefully if needed.

WATCH FOR SIGNS THAT NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION

- Rash becomes **painful, severe, or widespread**
- **Signs of infection** appear (pus, warmth, swelling, fever)
- **Interferes with sleep** or daily activities
- **Suddenly worsens**
- **Severe peeling or blistering**

Early reporting can prevent treatment interruptions.

EMOTIONS & SKIN RASH



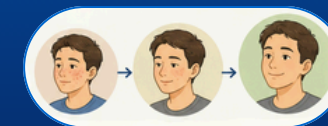
Skin rash is not only physically uncomfortable but emotionally difficult as well. It's not unusual to feel self-conscious about the appearance of your skin during treatment.



The best way to tackle these feelings is to talk to your doctor about what kind of medications are available to reduce the rash. Your care team can suggest skin care and makeup solutions as well.



Remember that you are not alone with this side effect. It is common for patients to develop some form of skin reaction with this type of treatment. There is a community of people and a care team to support you.



The symptoms are temporary. Skin rash signs and symptoms usually resolve within a month after treatment ends.

MORE INFORMATION: ERBITUX & VECTIBIX

Other side effects that may occur, are:

- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Mouth sores
- Low magnesium levels
- Low red blood count (anemia)

Both men and women should avoid becoming pregnant while taking these medications and for a period of time after treatment ends. Use effective birth control and talk with your care team about how long to continue it.

Check with your doctor about when you can safely resume breastfeeding if you have taken these drugs

Call 911 immediately if you experience shortness of breath, fever, wheezing, swelling of the face, feelings of the throat closing up, difficulty in breathing, or hives, as these are possible allergic reactions and need immediate attention.

Never take any medication without discussing it with your care team, including over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and supplements.

Alliance Helpline 877-422-2030

Erbitux Helpline 800-545-5979 | Vectibix Helpline 800-772-6436



The Colorectal Cancer Alliance is a national organization committed to ending colorectal cancer within our lifetime. We are your allies — a national network of passionate survivors, caregivers and advocates dedicated to helping you and your family navigate all aspects of the disease, from diagnosis and treatment to a lifetime of progression-free survival. We are a community of people eager to share experiences, address your concerns, and answer your questions. We understand the different stages of the colon cancer journey because we've been there. We are here for you when you need us because we believe tomorrow can't wait.

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